



This document addresses voluntary use of filtering facepiece respirators (FFRs) .

Informational sources are linked in [blue text](#) throughout the document.

VOLUNTARY USE OF FILTERING FACEPIECE RESPIRATORS (FFRs).

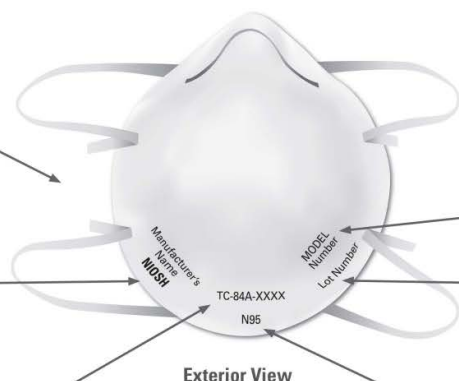
OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) allows for voluntary use of FFRs respirators. Most workers who wear respirators use them because they are required to do so by their employer to protect them from airborne hazards. However, there are some situations where you may want to wear a respirator even though respirator use is not required by your employer or an OSHA standard. For example, you might request to wear a respirator to avoid exposure to an airborne hazard, even if the amount of the hazardous substance does not exceed the limits set by OSHA standards. Another example where you might want to voluntarily use a respirator would be to reduce exposure and increase comfort when working in a non-hazardous but dusty situation; for example, sweeping a shop floor. If your employer permits you to wear a respirator where it is not required, it is considered voluntary respirator use. Remember, voluntary use is only permitted when your employer has determined that there is no airborne hazard that would require the use of a respirator.

For more information about NIOSH-Approved respirators, go to: <http://knowits.NIOSH.gov>

Example of Exterior Markings—Approval holder business name, a registered trademark or an easily understood abbreviation.

If privately labeled, the private label name or logo will appear instead of the approval holder business name.

NIOSH—NIOSH name in block letters or NIOSH logo.







Model # XXXX—Model Number or Part Number









Lot # XXXX—Lot Number and Date of Manufacture (recommended, but not required)

TC-Approval Number (TC-84A-XXXX)—For products manufactured after September 2008, the TC-Approval number is required to appear on the product.

Filter Designation—NIOSH filter series. Alpha-numerical rating followed by filter efficiency level (example, N95, N99, N100, R95, P95, P99, P100)

OSHA 29 CFR §1910.134, APPENDIX D

INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES USING RESPIRATORS WHEN NOT REQUIRED UNDER THE STANDARD	Putting on Your Respirator	
<p>Respirators are an effective method of protection against designated hazards when properly selected and worn. Respirator use is encouraged, even when exposures are below the exposure limit, to provide an additional level of comfort and protection for workers. However, if a respirator is used improperly or not kept clean, the respirator itself can become a hazard to the worker. Sometimes, workers may wear respirators to avoid exposures to hazards, even if the amount of hazardous substance does not exceed the limits set by OSHA standards. If your employer provides respirators for your voluntary use, or if you provide your own respirator, you need to take certain precautions to be sure that the respirator itself does not present a hazard.</p> <p>You should do the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read and heed all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding limitations of the FFR. 2. Choose a FFR certified for use to protect against the contaminant of concern. NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, certifies FFRs. A label or statement of certification should appear on the respirator or the packaging. It will tell you what the respirator is designed for and how much it will protect you. 3. Do not wear your FFR into atmospheres containing contaminants for which it is not designed to protect against. A FFR is designed to filter particulates and will not protect you against gases, vapors, or very small solid particles of fumes or smoke. 4. Keep track of your FFR, so that you do not mistakenly use someone else's. 5. Discard and replace FFR when they become soiled, damp or in any way contaminated. Do not reuse FFRs. 	<p>1. Position the respirator in your hands with the nose piece at your fingertips.</p>	
	<p>2. Cup the respirator in your hand allowing the headbands to hang below your hand. Hold the respirator under your chin with the nosepiece up.</p>	
	<p>3. Pull bottom strap over head, below ears, to around neck. Raise top strap to the crown of the head. Do not crisscross straps.</p>	
	<p>4. Place your fingertips from both hands at the top of the metal nose clip (if present). Slide fingertips down both sides of the metal strip to mold the nose area to the shape of your nose. Do not pinch the metal strip around the nose.</p>	

Checking Your Seal		Taking off Your Respirator	
<p>1. Place both hands over the respirator and take a quick breath in. The respirator should "suck in" and collapse around the face.</p>		<p>1. Do not touch the front of the respirator! It may be contaminated!</p>	
<p>2. Place both hands completely over the respirator and exhale. You should not feel air escaping around the seal.</p>		<p>2. Remove by pulling the bottom strap over back of head, followed by the top strap, without touching the respirator.</p>	
<p>3. If air leaks around the nose, readjust the nosepiece as described earlier. If air leaks at the mask edges, re-adjust the straps along the sides of your head until a proper seal is achieved.</p>		<p>3. Discard in waste container. Do not reuse the respirator.</p>	
<p>4. If you cannot achieve a proper seal due to air leakage, ask for help or try a different size or model.</p>		<p>4. Wash your hands with soap and water.</p>	

Surgical Masks are Not Filtering Facepiece Respirators (FFRs)

Three key criteria are required for a respirator to be effective:

1. The respirator filter needs to be highly effective at capturing particles that pass through it,
2. The respirator must fit the user's face snugly (i.e., create a seal) to minimize the number of particles that bypass the filter through gaps between the user's skin and the respirator seal; and
3. The respirator must be put on (donned) and taken off (doffed) correctly before and worn throughout the exposure.

It is important to note that surgical masks, sometimes referred to as facemasks, are different than respirators and are not designed nor approved to provide protection against airborne particles. Surgical masks are designed to provide barrier protection against droplets, however they are not regulated for particulate filtration efficiency and they do not form an adequate seal to the wearer's face to be relied upon for respiratory protection. Without an adequate seal, air and small particles leak around the edges of the respirator and into the wearer's breathing zone.

When properly fitted and worn, minimal leakage occurs around the edges of FFR when the user inhales, ensuring that the user's breathing air is being directed through the filter material.

Additionally, when wearing tight-fitting respirators, including FFRs, perform a user seal check each time you put one on to help ensure the best fit possible.

Understanding the Difference



Surgical Mask



N95 Respirator

Testing and Approval

Cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

Evaluated, tested, and approved by NIOSH as per the requirements in 42 CFR Part 84

Intended Use and Purpose

Fluid resistant and provides the wearer protection against large droplets, splashes, or sprays of bodily or other hazardous fluids. Protects the patient from the wearer's respiratory emissions.

Reduces wearer's exposure to particles including small particle aerosols and large droplets (only non-oil aerosols).

Face Seal Fit

Loose-fitting

Tight-fitting

Fit Testing Requirement

No

Yes

User Seal Check Requirement

No

Yes. Required each time the respirator is donned (put on)

Filtration

Does NOT provide the wearer with a reliable level of protection from inhaling smaller airborne particles and is not considered respiratory protection

Filters out at least 95% of airborne particles including large and small particles

Leakage

Leakage occurs around the edge of the mask when user inhales

When properly fitted and donned, minimal leakage occurs around edges of the respirator when user inhales

Use Limitations

Disposable. Discard after each patient encounter.

Ideally should be discarded after each patient encounter and after aerosol-generating procedures. It should also be discarded when it becomes damaged or deformed; no longer forms an effective seal to the face; becomes wet or visibly dirty; breathing becomes difficult; or if it becomes contaminated with blood, respiratory or nasal secretions, or other bodily fluids from patients.